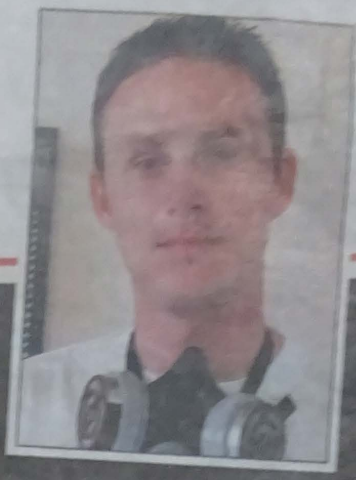


**Dan's designs  
on Prodigy  
comeback P3**



# FINALLY: SOFAS ARE SEIZED

Trading  
standards  
confiscate  
suspect  
furniture

**EXCLUSIVE**

By JON AUSTIN jon.austin@exa.com

IT took more than seven years and a string of Echo investigations...but Trading Standards finally seized suspect Polish furniture linked to travellers at Crays Hill.

Yesterday, as the second day of our two-part expose linking the suspected hazardous wastes to cigarette smuggling hit the streets, Essex Trading Standards and police were tipped off about a Polish lorry at the camp in Oak Lane. The Echo raced

CONTINUED PAGE 2



■ Swoop - trading standards and police inspect the lorry

Pictures: JON AUSTIN

**Crays Hill school governor's smuggling  
record prompts law change call P18**



■ On site - the lorry with a double-trailer at the Oak Lane camp



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## TODAY



**Domestic abuse numbers up** P12



**Closure-set school faces future** P14



**Who'll be top dog at Crufts?** P21

## MONDAY

**Woman Fairtrade can help you shop with clear conscience**



# Rampage yobs leave trail of destruction

By GINA MARDEN  
Crime reporter  
gina.marden@nqe.com

A GANG of yobs went on the rampage, trashing a bus ticket station and smashing windows, causing more than £3,000 damage.

As many as 15 youngsters were seen throwing yellow paint at the First ticket station on Southernhay, Basildon, in the middle of the afternoon.

They then went on a wrecking spree before smashing several win-

❑ Vandals trash bus ticket office  
❑ Office building windows smashed

dows on bus stops at the depot.

They also smashed six windows of the nearby Norwich Union building.

One eyewitness saw one of the gang hand-cuffed to railings by a police officer and seen as youths left the area in total chaos.

The man, aged 50, who did not want to be named, said: "There was smashed

glass everywhere and yellow paint all over the ticket station."

Police investigating the vandalism arrested one 16-year-old boy, but he was later released without charge.

PC Colin McCabe, of Basildon town neighbourhood policing team, said officers are appealing for witnesses.

He said: "Any vandalism, particularly damage as extensive as this, is completely unacceptable."

"It causes nothing but inconvenience and financial loss to its victims and

in this case, with the damage caused to the bus station, will also affect members of the public."

"People must have seen this large group in the area, so if they did, I would ask them to contact us."

James Chesters, spokesman for First Buses, condemned the yobs.

He said: "First deplores these mindless acts of vandalism, which are just malicious destruction for its own sake."

"The bus station in Basildon is a central hub

for passengers in the area, and this damage will affect many people, from the staff who work there to members of the public trying to go about their daily lives."

He added: "It is completely disgusting that yobs should be rampaging on the streets, destroying property."

"They can give an area a bad name it doesn't deserve."

Witnesses to the incident, which happened at 3.30pm on Wednesday, can contact PC McCabe at Basildon on 0300 333444.

## Sofas seized by trading standards and police

FROM PAGE 1

to the scene at about 2pm and captured a picture of a yellow Tecton Polska lorry parked on the legal part of the site, where a metal warehouse once stored the furniture.

By 8pm police and trading standards officers arrived and are believed to have stopped the lorry in Oak Road after it left the site.

Around ten police officers and four trading standards officers surrounded the vehicle and questioned the Polish driver.

The truck was seized by trading standards and furniture is expected to be tested to see if it meets fire safety regulations.

It is unclear if HM Customs are involved to check inside furniture for contraband.

As officers waited for the vehicle to be removed from the Belvedere car park, the Echo approached the driver.

He initially denied being on the traveller site, but admitted being there after being told he had photographs.

However, he denied delivering furniture. He simply said: "They just said it was somewhere I could stay."

He said his lorry contained furniture and did not believe anything was illegal.

Officers on scene remained tight-lipped until the arrival of councillor John Dornan, who asked if other agencies would be involved.

Mr Dornan, who has called for action over the issue, was told trading standards were taking the lead and other agencies would be involved as necessary.

Essex Police spokesman Nishan Wijerane refused to say if Customs were involved.

He said: "As yet, no offences have been committed. Trading standards is leading the investigation."

Trading standards spokesman Michael Page said: "This is a joint operation with police."

The Customs press office failed to comment at the time of going to press.

## FIRM HELPS OUT IN CHEMICAL SCARE

POLICE and firefighters were called after dozens of barrels leaking what was thought to be a lethal chemical were dumped in Basildon.

However, panic was averted as the culprit happened to fly-tip the barrels just yards from a hazardous waste disposal company, which stepped in to clean up.

The drama unfolded on the Burnt Mills Industrial Estate at 9pm on Wednesday after gallons of the chemical were discovered in a lorry park, off Courtauld Road.

Police cordoned off a large part of the estate while representatives

from the Environment Agency and Basildon Council visited the scene.

However, John Cook, director of the asbestos removal firm Cohart, based in nearby Archers Field, offered to help.

Perry Cox, sales executive of the company, said: "Although it was after-hours, John called in some of our staff and they worked for some time to remove and dispose of the chemicals safely."

"It was thought it could be extremely hazardous, but it turned out to be chlorine."

Police are investigating the incident.



■ Ready for action - Luke Hawkes, Lukasz Pajnowski and Perry Cox, from Cohart  
Picture: ANNA LUKALA PHOTOS

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